

Dear President Tusk,
Dear President Juncker,
Dear First Vice-President Timmermans,

The far-right continues to spread and entrench itself in the Member States. Authoritarian populists are able to exploit the fears of Europeans and convince the public to reject the very values that protect them. Without stronger grassroots support for the rule of law, democracy and fundamental rights among the European public, the EU's liberal democracies will progressively vote themselves out of existence.

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) promoting and protecting the rule of law, democratic pluralism and fundamental rights play a vital role in sustaining open democracies. Just as an independent judiciary and a free press, they are key to ensuring healthy democratic participation and government accountability before the law and the electorate. In recognition of this fact, the European Parliament called on the Commission to create a 'European Values Instrument' in a resolution of 19th April.

The Commission has chosen to ignore the views of the EU's only directly elected institution. Despite promising rhetoric from the Commission, the proposal for a Rights and Values programme published on 30th May effectively constitutes a continuation of existing funding programmes. This is inadequate for four reasons. First, the proposal fails to support the kinds of activities that organisations need to carry out to promote and protect fundamental values. Second, the proposal is excessively narrow in scope, being limited to pieces of EU law and policy or action at transnational or Union level. Third, the proposal makes no allowance for a more flexible interpretation of the Financial Regulation, which has been interpreted narrowly to date so as to effectively exclude grassroots organisations. Fourth, the proposal opens the fund to a large range of beneficiaries including in third countries and falls far short of the sum the EU dedicates to supporting organisations promoting Article 2 values in third countries.

The EU can no longer rely on philanthropic foundations and the Norwegian government to fund support for its fundamental values. We call on the Commission to work closely with the Council and the European Parliament to facilitate the amendment of the proposal for a Rights and Values programme along the lines already called for by the European Parliament resolution on the European Values Instrument. In particular: the scope of the Rights and Values programme should cover Article 2 values in the round; the supported activities should correspond to those needed to promote and protect EU values; operational funding should be available to national level NGOs and not only European networks; a substantial minimum budget should be ringfenced for NGOs; the Commission should implement the Financial Regulation flexibly to make the fund accessible to national level and grassroots NGOs, including through the use of independent intermediary organisations that can regrant to smaller organisations.

Yours sincerely,



Balazs Denes
Executive Director • Civil Liberties Union for Europe
Berlin, 1 October 2018

Name of organisation	Country
A Buon Diritto Onlus	Italy
AEDIDH	Spain
Antigone	Italy
APADOR	Romania
APDHE	Spain
Arci	Italy
Arcigay	Italy
Asociación Pro Derechos Humanos - Andalucía (APDHA)	Spain
Asociación Irídia	Spain
Associazione 21 luglio Onlus	Italy
Associazione Coscioni	Italy
Bendruomeniu kaitos centras	Lithuania
Bulgarian Helsinki Committee	Bulgaria
Center for Civic Initiatives	Lithuania
Center for Education, Counselling and Research	Croatia
Center for Peace Studies (CMS)	Croatia
Centre for Equality Advancement	Lithuania
Children's Rights Alliance	Ireland
CILD	Italy
CIPSI	Italy
CIR	Italy
Cittadinanzattiva	Italy
Civil Liberties Union for Europe	Germany/EU
Civil Rights Defenders	Sweden
Clean Air Action Group	Hungary
Documenta - Centar za suočavanje s prošlošću	Croatia
Estonian Chamber of Disabled People (EPIKoda)	Estonia
Estonian Human Rights Centre	Estonia
Estonian LGBT Association	Estonia
Estonian National Youth Council	Estonia
Federación SOS Racismo	Spain

Name of organisation	Country
Forum Droghe	Italy
Fundación Ciudadana Civio	Spain
GONG	Croatia
Green Istria	Croatia
Hay Derecho	Spain
HCLU	Hungary
Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights	Poland
Human Rights House Zagreb	Croatia
Human Rights Monitoring Institute	Lithuania
Hungarian Helsinki Committee	Hungary
IDHC	Spain
Institute for Political Ecology	Croatia
Irish Council for Civil Liberties	Ireland
Iuridicum Remedium (IURE)	Czech Republic
Justice and Peace	Netherlands
K_Alma	Italy
K-Monitor	Hungary
Kompass	Netherlands
La Ligue des droits de l'Homme	Belgium
League of Human Rights	Czech Republic
Lithuanian Centre for Human Rights	Lithuania
Lunaria	Italy
Magen David Keshet Italia	Italy
Mental Health Perspectives	Lithuania
Mental Health Reform	Ireland
Netherlands Helsinki Committee	Netherlands
NGO law institute	Lithuania
NGO Mondo	Estonia
NGO Sevenbow	Estonia
Observatori DESC	Spain
ODRAZ	Croatia

Name of organisation	Country
Oma Tuba	Estonia
On The Road	Italy
Parsec	Italy
Plena Inclusión	Spain
Privacy First Foundation	Holland
Progetto Diritti	Italy
Red Acoge	Spain
Regional Youth Info Centre Rijeka (UMKI)	Croatia
Rete Lenford	Italy
Rights International Spain	Spain
Roma Community Centre	Lithuania
Romanian Association Against Aids (ARAS)	Romania
School of Public Life	Hungary
Sibiu Comunity Foundation	Romania
SMART	Croatia
Società della Ragione	Italy
The Hague Peace Project	Netherlands
The Swedish Foundation for Human Rights	Sweden
Udruga	Croatia